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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 001999

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR P AND NEA/IRAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/17/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#) [JA](#)  
SUBJECT: JAPAN PASSES MESSAGE FROM IRAN REQUESTING RELEASE  
OF IRANIANS ALLEGEDLY DETAINED BY U.S. FORCES IN AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires James Zumwalt for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST. Please see paragraph 6.

12. (C) SUMMARY: Japanese MOFA officials called on Embassy Tokyo's Political Minister Counselor to convey a request from the Iranian MOI Director General for Security that the U.S. release eleven Iranian nationals detained in Western Afghanistan on or about June 4. Allegedly, nine of the people in question are members of a smuggling group, "Nemat Shahbaksh," and the remaining two are kidnap victims held by the group. Further details, such as names, are lacking, but the Japanese are willing to request additional information from the Iranians if we choose to take action on this request. The Iranian request to contact the U.S. was made to the Japanese in Tehran on June 14, and there has been no subsequent follow-up request from the Iranians, either in Tehran or in Tokyo. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) On July 18, MOFA Second Middle East Division Director Katsuhiko Takahashi, accompanied by Iran Unit Chief Takashi Kamada and Terrorism Prevention Division Director Hiroshi Yamauchi, called on Political Minister Counselor Michael Meserve to convey a request from the Iranian government that the United States release to the Afghan government eleven Iranian nationals being held by the U.S. in Afghanistan. According to Takahashi, this request came from Seyyed Mohsen Sadeghi, Ministry of Interior Director General of Security and Advisor to the Minister. Sadeghi met on June 14, 2008, with Japanese Ambassador to Tehran Akio Shirota in connection with the release that day of a Japanese hostage who had been held since October 2007 by an Iranian criminal gang, "Dullah Shahbaksh." In the course of their meeting, Sadeghi -- in what appeared to be an aside -- asked Shirota to pass a message to the United States.

14. (C) Sadeghi told Shirota that on or about June 4, eleven Iranian nationals had been detained by U.S. forces operating in Western Afghanistan, who suspected they were members of the Taliban. In fact, said Sadeghi, nine of the individuals were members of Nemat Shahbaksh, a smuggling gang with close ties to Dullah Shahbaksh, the group that kidnapped the Japanese student. The other two individuals were kidnap victims who were being held hostage by the other nine. All are Iranians. Sadeghi asked Shirota if Japan would ask the U.S. to release these criminals and their victims to the Afghan government, which would then turn them over to the Iranians. Shirota undertook to convey the message.

15. (C) Takahashi explained that he was delivering this message so Japan can go back to the Iranians and advise them it has been passed. He said that other than Sadeghi's conversation with Shirota, his government has heard nothing else from Iran on this matter, either in Tehran or in Tokyo.

In addition, he noted that he has no further information concerning the detained Iranians, such as names, descriptions, or the exact place and time of their arrest. He said Japan is willing to seek more details from Iran if the U.S. wishes to follow up.

¶6. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Embassy requests instructions on how to reply to MOFA with regard to whether the USG will take action on this request, or whether we should simply inform them the message has been passed to the Department.  
ZUMWALT